

Message Text

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PAGE 01 FRANKF 02101 140931Z
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SUBJ: HESSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS SET COURSE FOR OCTOBER 1978 ELECTIONS

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1. EXCEPT FOR A BRIEF CONTROVERSY PRECIPITATED BY A SHORT-
LIVED FEMINIST REVOLT, THE HESSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
CONVENTION IN WIESBADEN ON MARCH 11, 1978 WAS A TAME AND
EVEN LACKLUSTER AFFAIR. CAPPED BY AN APPEARANCE OF
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PAGE 02 FRANKF 02101 140931Z

CHANCELLOR HELMUT SCHMIDT BEFORE 259 DELEGATES AND
APPROX A THOUSAND GUESTS, THE CONVENTION DID,
HOWEVER, SET THE TONE FOR THE SPD'S EFFORT TO RETAIN
POWER IN HESSE AND OUTLINED THE MAIN THRUST OF THE
SOCIAL DEMOCRAT'S POLITICAL ARGUMENTATION DESIGNED TO
ACHIEVE THAT END ON ELECTION DAY, OCTOBER 8, 1978.

2. THE MODERATE AND CAREFULLY BALANCED PROGRAM FOR GOVERNING LAND HESSE FROM 1978 TO 1982 WAS ADOPTED WITH VIRTUALLY NO DEBATE AS PROPOSED BY THE HESSIAN SPD GOVERNING BOARD.

3. THE MORE DELICATE BUSINESS OF APPROVING THE "LAND" LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR SEATS IN THE LANDTAG PRESENTED ONLY SLIGHTLY MORE DIFFICULTY. THIS OCCURED WHEN THE FEMALE CONTINGENT OF THE CONVENTION, CROSSING IDEOLOGICAL LINES, OBJECTED TO WHAT THEY CHARGED TO BE

INADEQUATE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN ON THAT PORTION OF THE LIST OF CANDIDATES (I.E. THE FIRST 50 NAMES) WHICH HAS ANY CHANCE OF BEING ELECTED UNDER GERMANY'S MODIFIED PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM. AFTER SHORT BUT SPIRITED EXCHANGES THE LIST WAS IN THE END APPROVED IN THE ORDER INITIALLY PROPOSED BY THE LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING 5 WOMEN AMONG THE FIRST 50 CANDIDATES. POLITICALLY THE NET RESULT OF THE LIST OF CANDIDATES, AS DEVELOPED BY THE LEADERSHIP AND APPROVED BY THE CONVENTION., REPRESENTS A SLIGHT SHIFT IN FAVOR OF SPD MODERATES AT THE EXPENSE OF SHOUTH HESSIAN LEFT-WINGERS.

4. STRONG EMPHASIS ON THE SPD AS A RESPONSIBLE MODERATE "PEOPLES PARTY" (SIC CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT) WITH CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE OF THE COMMON MAN AND PROVIDING CLEAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 FRANKF 02101 140931Z

GOVERNMENT WILL BE THE IMAGE WHICH THE HESSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS WILL DO THEIR BEST TO PROJECT IN THE NEXT 6 TO 7 MONTHS. TO MAKE THAT IMAGE AS CREDIBLE AS POSSIBLE., THE LEADERSHIP WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP ITS LEFT WING INTELLECTUALS UNDER TIGHT WRAPS WHILE EMPHASIZING ITS TIES WITH AND SUPPORT FOR LABOR AND THE TRADE UNIONS. CARE WILL BE TAKEN TO AVOID ANYTHING WHICH MIGHT JEOPARDIZE THE SPD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FDP AND PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUING THE COALITION. THE OPPOSITION WILL BE REPRESENTED AS LIKELY TO BE DANGEROUS TO STABILITY AT HOME AND TO GERMANY'S STANDING AND REPUTATION ABROAD. ALFRED DREGGER HIMSELF WILL BE IDENTIFIED HEAVILY WITH FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS AND THE SPD WILL ASSERT THAT HE IS SEEKING THE MINISTER-PRESIDENCY IN WIESBADEN ONLY AS A STEPPING STONE TOWARD FULFILLMENT OF HIS LARGER AMBITIONS AS NATIONAL LEADER OF THE UNION AND PERHAPS ITS CANDIDATE FOR FEDERAL CHANCELLOR IN 1980.

5. COMMENT: WHETHER THESE THEMES WILL BE PERSUASIVE TO THE ELECTORATE IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL. CERTAINLY THE SPD'S CHANCES LOOK A GOOD DEAL BETTER NOW THAN THEY

DID IN THE HALF-YEAR FOLLOWING THE DISASTROUS DEFEATS
THE PARTY SUFFERED IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS OF
MARCH 20, 1977, BUT THERE ARE STILL ALMOST 7 MONTHS TO
GO IN WHICH MANY THINGS CAN HAPPEN, PARTICULARLY SINCE
THERE IS WIDESPEAAD RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF
THIS STATE ELECTION IN SHAPING THE FUTURE COURSE OF
GERMAN POLITICS ON THE NATIONAL SCENE. MOREOVER
DREGGER'S ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITIES, HIS ATTENTION TO
DETAIL AT THE GRASS ROOT LEVEL, HIS PERSONAL
ATTRACTIVENESS AND THE ADVANTAGES CONFERRED ON THE
HESSIAN CDU BY A STRING OF VICTORIES UNDER HIS LEADER-
SHIP IN RECENT YEARS ARE FORMIDABLE FACTORS. IT WILL
BE A HARD FOUGHT CAMPAIGN WITH ALL THE PRINCIPALS
INVOLVED MAKING A HEAVY INVESTMENT IN PERSONAL EFFORT.
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PAGE 04 FRANKF 02101 140931Z

AT THIS TIME THE OUTCOME REMAINS UNCERTAIN. LEHMANN

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